

3.2. Cultural Onsite Enablers

A company culture is generally defined as the collective way in which employees interact to make the day-to-day, large and small, decisions that execute the organization's vision and strategy. Even with all of their strengths, lean tools arguably only contribute 20% to a successful continuous improvement program. However, if an organization has a strong lean culture, it will contribute the other 80%. Hence, once the foundational strategy is clear to everyone and measurement goals are established, additional cultural enablers can be developed into a framework that promotes a philosophy of seeking perfection in all work processes.

Clear goals and metrics, along with daily communication, are clearly important in a lean culture as described. Still, much of a cultural foundation lies in linking common HR behavior expectations to lean implementation rules and standards. The processes of recruitment, formal orientation, training, individual development, and reward systems all play a large part in giving employees the basic skills and instincts to contribute to company improvements. And once these links have been shaped, the focus must be redirected to leadership, which needs to gain the respect of new employees through both coaching and mentoring performance objectives.

Organizational alignment and culture building are not complicated, but the processes are broad in scope. Development of a lean culture needs to cascade through an organization and be introduced from the moment a potential candidate is interviewed, through orientation and on-the-job training, and continue well into a person's career with the company. This enables leadership to demonstrate humility by constantly engaging employees and providing them with personal learning and development opportunities for growth.

3.3. Common Mistakes and Lessons Learned

There is plenty of opportunity to learn from poorly implemented lean programs. The internet is littered with case studies and war stories of improvement projects gone wrong. For wind energy, the top ten common mistakes can be summed-up as follows:

3.3. Common Mistakes and Lessons Learned

(continued)

3.3.1. Starting a lean transformation without experienced and professional help

It is very difficult to complete a lean event if there is lack of training or involvement in continuous improvement work. Whether the team draws on an internal lean facilitator or contracts an external expert, it is always best to employ someone with Kaizen experience to work with teams during the start of any project or major program.

3.3.2. Relying completely on a lean champion

On the other hand, a strong and committed implementation team is necessary for any project to be successful. External experts typically do not have the authority or commitment to make things happen that are necessary to fully optimize a process.

3.3.3. Too many conflicting metrics

The KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid) principle needs to be closely followed in regards to dashboards. One measurement per category is ideal, but never have more than two. While there may be dozens of key performance indicators (KPI) being tracked by various teams or departments for each category, only the primary metrics should be displayed for daily huddle meetings.

3.3.4. Continuous improvement not linked to a business plan

This mistake is easily rectified through communication. Before any actions are initiated, each group or individual needs to submit a brief plan or project charter. The proposal must be quickly reviewed, compared to the annual plan and/or other projects in queue, and approved by a designated leader or cross functional team. This is to avoid one of the worst “wastes”: doing work that does not need to be done at all.

3.3.5. Not providing adequate training, facilitation, and follow-up

A few hours or days of training will not create an expert. Continuous improvement teams need to be developed using a combination of classroom training, project work, and benchmarking. And even when a skilled group is available, a facilitator needs to be identified or trained to direct and focus team progress.

3.3.6. Believing a tool, such as 5S implementation, can be completed in a day or even week

One can seldom complete the "Set in Order" step of a 5S project in a week. Two or three rounds of review are normally required to be sure excess material, tools and equipment are properly dispositioned. A process checklist with defined steps is the best way to ensure sustainability and accountability.

3.3.7. Treating symptoms and not determining root cause

Unfortunately, some problems get fixed only to reoccur. Lean tools such as the "5 Why" analysis are specifically designed to guide a team to define the root cause. While these methods take more time and discipline, solving a reoccurring problem normally saves a lot of time and cost.

3.3.8. Believing you will achieve a lean transformation only by applying lean tools

While all of the lean tools can help solve problems and reduce costs, creating a lean culture is the endgame.

3.3.9. Lack of top management understanding and commitment

No program will ever survive leadership apathy. Lean needs to be understood and promoted by top management. Employees are inspired to improve by leadership "walking the talk" and expecting to see management embracing change and pursuing perfection.

3.3.10. Making the statement and believing "we have completed a lean program"

It is called "continuous improvement" because the journey is never complete. When you stop improving, there is always another entity willing to further innovate and claim your business market share.